1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Chapter I

The Setting in Time; the Historical Isolation of Bastar

[3] Bastar State lies at the extreme south-east corner of the Central Provinces of India, between 17° 46′ and 20° 14′ north, and 80° 15′ and 82° 1′ east. Its area, according to the recently revised Survey of India figures, of 13,725 square miles makes it the tenth state in India in size, larger than Belgium and nearly as large as Holland. It is far larger than any of the old Central Provinces and Orissa States, with which it has recently been brought into the new Eastern States Agency. But it is one of the most sparsely peopled tracts of India, the 1931 population of 524,721 giving a density of only 34 to the square mile. If any part of India is still *terra incognita* to nearly all British officials and travellers, it is the vast tract covered by Bastar and the huge Jeypore zamindari recently transferred from the Vizagapatam Agency of Madras to the new province of Orissa.

[16]

[8] To the ordinary Indian of neighbouring districts, even to many of the few immigrant Hindu and Mussalman traders, this remains a land of savages, seeking still for human victims to sacrifice to their fetishes, skilled in herbs and simples, and potent practitioners of magic and witchcraft. Their view is little changed from that held 110 years ago by Maratha officials who described the Marias of the Abujhmar mountains to Sir Richard Jenkins, then Resident at the Court of Nagpur, as 'naked savages, living on roots and sprigs, and hunting for strangers to sacrifice'.

[17] Bastar has in fact always been an almost unknown backwater of the river of Indian history. The late Chief, Maharani Prafulla Kumari Devi, at her accession in 1924 was the last legitimate survivor of one of the most ancient royal families of southern India, the Kakatiya, which reigned at Warangal from about A.D. 1150 to 1425, first possibly as feudatories of the Chalukya kings and then independently. In Bastar folk-song, Annam Deo, the first to reign in Bastar, is spoken of as 'Chalkibans Raja', which may be a corruption of 'Chalukya-bans' and indicate that the Kakatiya family was a cadet branch of the Chalukya. Pratap Rudra, the greatest and the last independent Kakatiya king of Warangal, lost his life and independence in battle with the Mohammedan invaders of the Deccan under Ahmad Shah Bahmani early in the fifteenth century and, according to Bastar tradition and folk-song, his brother Annam Deo fled across the Godavari into Bastar, which had

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

175 been an outlying and loosely-held group of feudal dependencies of Warangal. For inscriptions show that before this, in the eleventh century, a Telugu line of Nagvansi kings ruled at Barsur in Dantewara tahsil and at Kuruspal near the Chitrakot falls of the river Indrawati in Jagdalpur tahsil over central Bastar, then known as Chakrakot; there are also clear signs of another chiefship comprising the Sukma zamindari and the former zamindaris of Chintalnar and Bhiji, now in the Konta tahsil; the late zamindar of Sukma always claimed that Chintalnar and Bhiji had been given to cadet branches of his family by his ancestors and that his family, though dependent on Warangal, was established in Bastar at Sukma before Annam Deo left Warangal. There are traditions of a Karna king in northern Bastar and of a Karnatak king at Jagdalpur; and legend still speaks of rajas of Kuakonda and Katakalian in Dantewara tahsil, of the tailed rajas of Tirathgarh in Jagdalpur tahsil, and of Annam Deo fighting to subdue the chiefs of Paralkot, Bhairamgarh and Barsur. The so-called Koyas of southern Bastar still have traditions of visiting King Pratap Rudra's court at Warangal. Till 200 years ago or less, Bastar retained several zamindaris south of the Godavari and in the present East Godavari Agency of Madras, while lists survive of the numerous petty garhs and taluqs, each loosely administered for the Chief of Bastar by Diwans, or alienated to the various zamindars or sub-chiefs, of whom only Bhopalpatnam, Sukma, Kutru and Kotapalli-Pamer now remain. In Kutru, moreover, there remain three or four sub-zamindars holding under the zamindar. All these facts indicate that before Annam Deo's arrival there was a nominal suzerainty of Warangal over most of Bastar, the real authority resting with local chiefs or in the heads of the old tribal organization that was so marked a feature of the medieval kingdoms of the eastern Central Provinces and some of the Chhota Nagpur and the Orissa States. This organization has been ably outlined by Mr. C. U. Wills, I.C.S., in his monograph on 'The Territorial System of the Rajput Kingdoms of Medieval Chhattisgarh', published at pp. 197-262 of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, new series, Vol. XV, 1919.

The ruined temples at Barsur, Bhairamgarh, Dantewara, Kuruspal and elsewhere indicate an advanced Hindu civilization in the areas directly administered by the Telugu Nagvansi chiefs of Chakrakot. It was a country worth invading in quite early times; inscriptions tell of many raids between A.D. 844 and 1150 by Eastern Chalukya, Chola, Western Chalukya and Hoysala princes. There must have been a strong early Telugu infiltration, lasting till the Mohammedan conquest of Warangal and Annam Deo's flight into Bastar, after which the curtain fell upon the country till

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

1853, when it came into direct political relations with the British on the escheat of the Bhonsla Maratha kingdom, to which it had become nominally tributary. Of that infiltration the strongest remaining signs are the groups of Telanga villages that still survive like islands in the heart of Bison-horn Maria and Koya tracts, chiefly in and around the administrative or religious centres of the old Telugu kingdoms such as Dantewara, Barsur, Bhairamgarh, Bijapur and Jaggergonda. They were cut off from Telingana when the south of the state was abandoned to Maria and Koya tribes as a barrier against the Mohammedan. They have forgotten Telugu, and speak Gondi or Halbi; they observe most of the Maria customs and festivals; in fact there is little to distinguish them from their Maria and Koya neighbours, and they are rightly known as the Jhadi (i.e. jungly) Telanga caste, under which name they are described in the article at pp. 238-42 of Russell and Hiralal's *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces*, Vol. III.[1] But they still provide the priests and servitors of the tutelary deities of the old dynasties, such as Manikeshwari at Barsur and even Danteshwari and Pedamma at Dantewara, and keep up the old ritual in a degraded form. The Marias of the Abujhmar hills seem to be the most primitive and isolated 'aboriginal' race of the Central Provinces; yet only a few miles of mountain and forest separate their habitat from these old centres of Telugu civilization.

The present Maharaja is the twentieth of his line to reign in Bastar. History has little to relate of his predecessors, as their actions had practically no effect upon the outer world. They tended always at first to move farther northward, probably to put as many miles as possible between them and the Mohammedan conquerors, who indeed in 1610 made an abortive raid into Bastar, to be defeated by heavy rain, the difficulty of communications and dearth of provisions in this heavily forested and thinly-peopled tract rather than by the arms of Raja Pratap Raj Deo (Briggs' *Ferishta*, Vol. III, p. 481). To the north they came into contact with the Rajput kingdoms of Raipur and Ratanpur (Chhattisgarh) and Kanker, from the last of which they conquered eighteen *garhs* or *parganas* around Bare Dongar in the present Kondagaon tahsil; and they extended their territory to Sihawa and the borders of Chhattisgarh. To this expansion was probably due the substitution of Hindi or Halbi influences for Telugu. The *garhs* around Bare Dongar are a stronghold of the Halba tribe, whose *Kutumb-Naik* or headman and chief log-god Kachchua Deo live at Chingnur, near Bare Dongar. The tribe has special privileges in the adjacent Kanker State, where a Halba invests each new chief with the royal

[1] Referred to subsequently as 'Russell and Hiralal'.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

175 robes and affixes the *tika* or sign of office on his forehead. Probably on the conquest of the Bare Dongar country many of them entered the Bastar Raja's service, and supplied most of his troops or militia. The chief Halba villages of the North, such as Bare Dongar, Chhota Dongar, Kolur, Sonpur, Antagarh, Partabpur and Narainpur, are the headquarters of old *garhs* or modern *parganas*, and are islanded in a surrounding sea of 'Muria' or 'Maria' tribes like the Jhadi Telanga villages of the south; the Halba villagers seem to be the descendants of the old garrisons of *paik* militia. To this day the Halbas admit outsiders into their community, while the modern Hindu immigrants commonly take women of the country. The Halbas are thus a mixture, probably, of foreign and aboriginal blood. Their language is the *lingua franca* of Bastar, and, whether classed as a dialect of Marathi with Grierson or of Eastern Hindi with Sten Konow, is at all events an Aryan dialect, and a principal agent in the modification of aboriginal habits and thought; at [191] the 1931 census it was found that 207 *per mille* of the 262,988 Bastaris speaking Gondi dialects as their mother-tongue also spoke Halbi. Its influence is far greater than that of Telugu, which was spoken only by 36·4 out of every thousand speakers of Gondi. Actually there were only 11,662 with Telugu as mother-tongue, against 171,293 with Halbi and 25,774 with Hindustani, Chhattisgarhi and Rajasthani. Hindi influence from Chhattisgarh and the north is now the main foreign influence at work in Bastar.

The State had few dealings with the outer world from 1450 to 1860. A Maratha army under Nilu Pandit intervened on behalf of Raja Dalpat Deo's younger brother in about 1750 and captured Bastar, the old capital, only to be surprised and cut to pieces by Dalpat Deo, Nilu Pandit escaping with the help of a Banjara who sewed him up in a sack and carried him out of Bastar on his pack bullock. But in 1780 Dalpat Deo's son and successor Daryao Deo had to seek Maratha aid against his brother Ajmir Singh, and bound himself to pay a small annual tribute of Rs. 4,000 to the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur. The Bastar chiefs, however, retained full local independence and powers of life and death, and there was no direct interference in the routine management of the State by the Nagpur authorities. Such interference as there was was either to settle the frequent quarrels between Raja Bhopal Deo and his brother and Diwan, Lal Dalganjan Singh, or was dictated by the Government of India in furtherance of their policy of suppressing Meriah or ritual human sacrifice. The history of the measures taken to suppress this practice in Orissa, especially among the Khonds of Gumsur and Kalahandi, and in Jeypore zamindari, is well known. From 1837 onwards hearsay reports were collected

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

either by Madras Presidency officials or by the special staff deputed for this purpose to the Orissa hill tracts of the prevalence of this practice in Bastar. In consequence, at the instance of the British Resident at Nagpur Lal Dalganjan Singh was summoned to Nagpur in 1842 and examined, and a guard of Nagpur Raj police was stationed at Dantewara to prevent human sacrifices in the temple of the State goddess Danteshwari. But it was never proved that such sacrifices had ever taken place. Writing in 1862 after a prolonged tour in Bastar and after special enquiries into this matter in both Kalahandi and Bastar States, of which as Deputy Commissioner of Sironcha he was then in political charge, Captain C. Glasfurd stated that the guard had continued to be posted at Dantewara ever since 1842, and that ' even if the abominable rite ever existed, which is doubtful, it has altogether fallen into disuse '. The matter is not really relevant to the subject of this book, save that to these suspicions were due the first visits of British officials to the State, and the ultimate decision to insist on Raja Bhairon Deo accepting officials from British India as his Diwans. I personally doubt whether such sacrifices ever took place; if they did they were semi-State ceremonies connected with the Raja's yearly Dasehra celebrations, the celebrants were Telangas, and the Marias had nothing to do with them.[1] In actual fact, despite many past

[1] It is so commonly asserted that these sacrifices were prevalent in Bastar at Dantewara that it is of interest to note the evidence. The 1842 action of the Nagpur Raj was based merely on a few hearsay reports collected through the Agency for the Orissa Hill Tracts, to the effect that victims were kidnapped from outside Bastar, that in Bastar often twenty men were sacrificed at a time, the worst case being said to have been the sacrifice in 1826 of twenty-five or twenty-seven men by the Bastar Raja before setting out on a visit to His Highness the Raja of Nagpur, which was still referred to in 1838 as ' the great sacrifice '; the latter report, however, goes on in the usual *omne ignotum pro magnifico* strain that then and now distinguishes outside Hindu statements about the ' wild jungles ' of ' Kanksri-Bastar ', to suggest that the practice was rife also in Kanker and adjoining tracts north of Bastar, and that ' in some of the wilder jungles bordering on Chhattisgarh the Gonds add cannibalism to this horrid deed and eat the flesh by sacrifice '. Captain J. MacVicar, the Agent in the Orissa Hill Tracts, in 1855 visited Bastar, saw the Raja and the Lal and visited Dantewara to test the truth of various reports. Beyond the grovelling terror which the goddess Danteshwari inspired throughout the parts visited by him, and the assertions of a man in his camp that sacrificers had recently tried to kidnap him, and of a woman that six years before a man had been sacrificed during some disturbances by the Lal Sahib's orders, he left nothing on record to justify his conclusion that it was beyond all doubt that human sacrifices had never ceased to be offered in spite of the orders of the Nagpur Darbar and successive British Residents at Nagpur. Had he found any real evidence, it is scarcely conceivable that action would not have been taken against the Raja and the Lal Sahib. Actually, all that was done was a visit late that year from Lieut. C. Elliot, the Deputy Commissioner of Raipur, who made no further enquiries, but substituted for the old police guard guards of entirely Mussalman police at Jagdalpur and Dantewara, and straitly warned the Raja that he must do his

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

175 assertions to the contrary, and although it was almost an article of faith with the Political Department of the Central Provinces that Danteshwari was the chief and most dreaded goddess of all the peoples of Bastar and that her high priest the Jia of Dantewara was the one man who could influence the 'wild Maria tribes', yet she is almost unknown to the Marias of the Abujhmar hills save in a village or two on the Dantewara edge of the hills, while even the more sophisticated Bison-horn Marias of the Dantewara tahsil pay only nominal respect to the goddess in villages where a thatched temple has been erected in her name by non-Maria settlers. The Jia may have influence over the Jhari Telanga and Halba residents of Dantewara tahsil; over the Marias he has none. Hindu State

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782 utmost to suppress the rite and to establish a more just system of administration. In 1859 the same officer, now Captain Elliot, informed the Raja of the intention of the Commissioner of the Nagpur Province to recommend the extension to Bastar of the operations of the Agent for the Orissa Hill Tracts for enquiring into the prevalence of human sacrifice; but the Raja protested again, as always before, that no such thing had ever occurred; and Captain Elliot stated that he had never had any report of any sacrifice, nor had anything ever come to his notice by rumour or otherwise to lead him to believe that such a thing had happened since the province had come under British rule. No action seems to have been taken, and in 1862 Captain Glasfurd, whose personal opinion has been quoted above to the effect that it was doubtful if such sacrifices had ever taken place, reported that no special agency was necessary for this purpose in Bastar beyond the temple guard. Even this police guard was discontinued in 1863, and five years later the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces reported to the Government of India that there had been no practice of human sacrifice in the Central Provinces 'of late years, if indeed within the memory of man'.

There was thus never a single authenticated instance of human sacrifice in Bastar. Nearly all the stories emanated from Jeypore, the Maharaja of which was at bitter enmity with the Chief of Bastar. In fact, the latter frequently protested that the Jeypore Maharaja was the source of these slanders.

In 1885-6 the whole question was revived in consequence of alarming reports emanating from the Madras police in Jeypore of gangs of Bastar kidnappers being abroad in Jeypore looking for victims for sacrifice at Dantewara. Initial enquiries by Sardar Rattan Singh, the Raipur District Superintendent of Police, suggested that the reports were fabrications and that there was not the slightest particle of evidence to implicate the Bastar authorities. While the enquiries were in progress, the Madras authorities were scared by a further report that an excise peon had been kidnapped near the Bastar border, and urged the immediate despatch of police and troops into Bastar. The Jeypore District Superintendent of Police with some Jeypore police, and the Political Agent of the Chhattisgarh States with fifty military police, proceeded at once to Bastar. Masses of statements were taken implying the existence of a regular organization to kidnap victims and keep them in various hiding-places till wanted for sacrifice; it was suggested that in twelve villages the ryots held their land free of land revenue for the service of kidnapping victims. No proof could be obtained of these allegations, and not one of the alleged hiding-places was traced. Though Raja Bhairon Deo was removed from the State during the enquiry, nothing was found to implicate him. There was not any evidence of Bastar having caused the disappearance of the persons alleged to have been kidnapped from Jeypore. In consequence of

I: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

officials incline to claim the aboriginals as Hindus and to deprecate census classification of their religion as animistic or tribal. It has always been easy for such persons to identify the Maria's cult of the Earth or *Bhum* in its aryanized form Mati Deo with Mata or Mai, of whom Danteshwari is the Bastar incarnation; and another source of confusion has been the presence in every aboriginal village of a *gudi* (hedge-temple) or other rough shrine of the *Nar Taluri* ('Village Mother'), known to the Hindus as Gāoṇ Devī, and easily identified with Mata Devi or Maoli. Actually the Marias, whether of the Abujhmar hills or Bison-horn, do not even know Dantewara by that name, but by its older and pre-Danteshwari name of Jatawada.

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various statements made, Shamsundar, the Jia or hereditary high priest of the Dantewara temple, the representative of a Rajput family that by tradition had come from Warangal with Raja Annam Deo, was committed for trial on a charge of murdering a Parja who was proved to have disappeared from a Bastar village in 1883, and it was alleged that the Jia had confessed that he had sacrificed him. The Commissioner of Chhattisgarh, Mr. Chisholm, tried the case as Sessions Judge. The Jia had all along refused to sign the confession and stated that he had only said what he did to avoid the indignity of handcuffs. The other witnesses alleged that the statements made in the enquiry had been false, and inspired by fear of the Jeypore police, who had grossly ill-treated them. The Judge held that the witnesses had deliberately made false and tutored statements under the influence of threats, and that the prosecution case completely failed. The Jia was therefore acquitted. In his report to the Chief Commissioner, he said that he considered that the Raja had been wrongly accused, that there was no proof that any human sacrifices had been offered in recent years in Bastar, and that there was scarcely anything tangible enough to justify even suspicion. This view was accepted by the Chief Commissioner, though he was still doubtful about the Jia's confession, which had contained new details of the alleged sacrifice not given by other witnesses, since he considered the Jia too intelligent to be thrown off his balance by a threat of being handcuffed. The kidnapping scare, he pointed out, could be paralleled by various examples in other parts of India, and it was natural for popular rumour to attribute the several disappearances to agents kidnapping victims for Danteshwari because of the old tradition of such sacrifices, while there was nothing strange about disappearances in a country swarming like Bastar with tiger; but there was bound to remain some suspicion over the purpose of attempts that were proved to have been made to kidnap various persons.

In Dantewara they will still show you where the police dug in vain near the temples for the skeletons of the alleged victims, but found not a bone to substantiate the stories of the informers. There were no villages held revenue-free, and no cages for the destined victims. So far as the older inhabitants remember the enquiry, they think the Raja was badly treated. There is no one who even now can give any information about human sacrifices in former days; they deny that there ever were any. Certainly the Meriah rite was never celebrated in Bastar.

Old rumours die hard; in 1913 the Madras police interested themselves in the matter once again, when an Inspector reported his personal belief that the sacrifices still took place at the occasional visits of the late Raja Rudra Pratap Deo to Dantewara, and that a sacrifice was likely at his then impending visit, as he had no son to succeed him! This was at a time when the Raja had lost his powers after the 1910 rebellion and had to follow the advice of a resident European Diwan.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

●175 The earliest recorded attempt of any European to enter Bastar was made by Captain Blunt in 1795, when journeying from Chunarghur in the United Provinces to Yertnagudam in the 'Ellore Circar' of Madras. His report, which has recently been reprinted in a Central Provinces Government publication, 'Early English Travellers in the Nagpur Territories', was referred to as late as 1853 by Sir Erskine Perry, addressing the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, as still giving almost all the information then known not only about Bastar, but of many other parts of Gondwana (the modern Central Provinces), the highlands and jungles of which then comprised 'such a large tract of unexplored country that they form quite an oasis in our maps'. Before his attempt he was warned by both Ittul Pandit, the Maratha governor of Chhattisgarh, and by the Raja of Kanker that he would find it difficult if not impossible to march across Bastar from Kanker to Jeypore, the country being wild and mountainous and the Gond inhabitants very savage. The people were said to be naturally quiet; but the Marathas had never succeeded in doing more than persuade Bastar to pay an occasional small tribute. At that time this had been withheld for four or five years, and the Marathas had only just made the Bastar Chief pay Rs. 5,000 after a series of raids on Bastar territory, which they had persuaded the various 'Gond zemeendars' and neighbours of Bastar to make in order to wrest from him as much territory as possible; in the course of these raids many villages along the Kanker-Jagdalpur-Jeypore road had been plundered, and even the Banjara carriers had abandoned that route to Jeypore. In retaliation, raiding parties from Bastar often descended to plunder the plains villages.[1] Captain Blunt therefore turned west and marched through the zamindaris of the present Drug and Chanda districts, but ultimately attempted to pass from the Ahiri zamindari in the far south-east of the Chanda district across the Indrawati river into the Bhopalpatnam zamindari of Bastar, some miles upstream from the confluence of the Indrawati and the Godavari. He was fiercely attacked by the 'Bastar Gonds' both by day and night, and though their bows, arrows and axes were no match for his firearms, he abandoned the attempt to enter

[18] [1] Compare the following extract from Firminger's Edition of the Fifth Report on East India Affairs, 1812, Vol. III, page 109 et seq., referring to the people of Bastar, Rampa and Kalahandi:—

'The people in general, although rude and barbarous, may yet be denominated warlike, as they have always distinguished themselves as bold persevering champions of the great law of nature. Being driven to their wild unwholesome fastnesses among the mountains, they frequently descend in harvest time into the lowlands, to dispute the produce of their ancient rightful inheritance with the present possessors, but their incursions are desultory and simply impelled by the pressing want of subsistence.'

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

Bastar, and learned later from the Maratha *amil* of Deolmari that he had retired only just in time, as word had been passed from zamindar to zamindar in Bastar to combine to plunder his party. Unless there has been since then a wide displacement of population—which is quite possible in view of the chronic mismanagement of the Bhopalpatnam and Kutru zamindaris of Bastar—it is unlikely that his assailants were Abujhmar or Bison-horn Marias or Koyas; they were probably members of the gangs of ruffians at that time maintained by all the petty chieftains of the Godavari valley, or else Gonds of the type known in that part of Bastar to the Telugus as Dorla, probably Bison-horn Marias who, on descending to the Godavari valley, had come into contact with the outside world. This Maratha Amil, in congratulating Blunt on his escape from the mountains and jungles in which several of the Amil's men had been lost, added some remarks about the men of the jungle which rightly gave the wandering Banjara the credit of being the first civilizing influence in Bastar; his remarks, with the necessary modifications, are certainly true of a later period in the Abujhmar hills and the wilder parts of Central Bastar. He represented the Banjaras as having done much to conciliate and partially civilize the 'Gonds', 'for the traffic which they carry on among them, particularly in salt and sugar, had introduced a taste for luxuries, which many of them now could not easily dispense with. This had also induced them to be more industrious in collecting the produce of their jungles, such as lac, iron ore, and other articles for barter, and had necessitated their affording protection to the Brinjaries (*sic*). In the course of this traffic, which had now lasted about twenty-five years, the desire of the Goands (*sic*) for salt and sugar had considerably increased, and tended more to their civilization than any other means: for before they had tasted or acquired a relish for these articles, no man could venture among them; and be assured me that it had a more powerful effect than the whole force of the Mahratta arms in rendering them obedient to their government.'

The first Europeans actually to visit Bastar seem to have been Captain Fenwick in 1850 and Mr. Take in 1855; they made only short trips up a portion of the Kolab-Sabari river that forms for many miles the eastern boundary of Bastar. I have not seen their reports. Captain MacVicar's brief visit early in 1855 and the important visit of Colonel (then Lieut.) C. Elliot, the Deputy Commissioner of Raipur, later that year have been mentioned above in the footnote on human sacrifice. Elliot's report was reprinted in 1861 as 'Selections from the Records of the Government of India in the Foreign Department, No. XXX. Report on the Bustar and Kharonde Dependencies of the Raepore District'. He

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

175
114

entered Bastar from Sihawa in the south of the Raipur district, near the trijunction of Raipur, Kanker and Bastar, marched south-east to Jagdalpur and thence to Dantewara, leaving all the zamindari country south of Dantewara and the Abujhmar hills and the present Antagarh tahsil untouched. His report gives some details of the races in the State, much of which, however, repeats obvious *omne ignotum pro magnifico* tales of local Hindus; but he saw nothing of the Abujhmar hills, and, though he visited Dantewara, little of the Bison-horn Marias of that tahsil. He was, on the whole, more interested in the economic and administrative problems of Bastar than in its people. There was also a visit at about this time by Captain Stewart, Explorer of Forests, while in 1855 and 1856 respectively Lieut. Goddard and Lieut. (afterwards Major-General) F. T. Haig explored the Godavari valley in the investigation of Sir A. Cotton's ambitious but largely abortive scheme for making the Godavari and its affluent the Wardha river navigable from Wardha to the sea. Haig's Report on the Navigability of the River Godavari was published at Madras in 1856; I have found also at p. 357 of the *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. V, 1876, an allusion to a report of a visit by him, when a Colonel, to Jagdalpur; but I have been unable to obtain copies of either report, though both are said to contain ethnographic notes.

The most valuable and thorough of the early reports, especially from the ethnographic point of view, is that of Captain C. L. R. Glasfurd, Deputy Commissioner of the former Sironcha District and Political Agent for Bastar, published in 1863 in No. XXXIX of *Selections from the Records of the Government of India in the Foreign Department*. He spent much of the touring seasons of 1861 and 1862 in Bastar, and was probably the first European to visit the then numerous zamindaris of the south, certainly the first to explore any part of the Abujhmar hills. His report is the entire source of the article on Bastar in Grant's 1870 *Central Provinces Gazetteer*, and many of his statements are repeated, unfortunately not always in their true context, in the article 'Gond' in Russell and Hiralal, Vol. III. In February 1930 I found his name still remembered as Gilaspat Sahib in two Abujhmar villages which did not appear to have been visited in the interval by any other European. An example of his accuracy is that he noted the distinction between the Marias of the Abujhmar, whom he termed Marees, and the Marias of Jagdalpur, Dantewara and Bijapur tahsils, whom he termed Marias, but who are known to some of the Abujhmar Marias as Dandami Marias and are generally referred to in this book as Bison-horn Marias. His visit laid the lines of the future policy of the Central Provinces Administration in Bastar State, and it is

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

worth while to reproduce some of his concluding remarks in paragraph 175 of the report :—

' In most English Maps " unexplored territory " is inscribed on the very centre of the Dependency ; while the best Indian Map by Colonel Scott, Quarter-Master General of the Madras Presidency, gives but few details, and those few incorrect. The country, it will be perceived, is an interminable forest, with the exception of a small cultivated tract around Jugdalpore, intersected by high mountain ranges, which present serious obstacles to traffic. Its insalubrity is proverbial ; the inhabitants are composed of rude, uncivilized tribes of Gonds ; in some parts almost savages, who shun contact with strangers, have but few wants which they cannot supply themselves ; honest and interesting to the Ethnologist perhaps, but a race who prefer the solitude of forests to the bustle of towns, and the freedom of the savage to all the allurements and comforts of civilization. With such a country and such inhabitants, rapid progress and improvement cannot be looked for ; and any efforts to open out the Dependency, with the hope of immediately stimulating trade, or rather creating it where it never existed, would end in disappointment. Our efforts for the present should be to open up a few important lines on which traffic already exists, and to ameliorate the condition of the people by the introduction of a better system of criminal and judicial procedure than that at present in force at Jugdalpore, and, above all, by opening up the Sironcha District, which intervenes between Bustar and the Godavery. The opening up of this river will do more to improve the condition of the Bustar Dependency than the most elaborate system of roads would without it. A demand would be created, which would send traders into parts they never ventured before, and the inhabitants would receive cloth, salt, tobacco and other articles in exchange for their rice, lakh, wax, etc., in the interior. The fact is that the Dependency must be civilised, and the improvement to be material and lasting must have the navigable Godavery and the districts on its banks as its base line ; the former once open, and the latter profiting by the facilities of communication with the coast, the bars to civilization in Bustar will soon be broken down, and that from the direction of the Godavery. In the meantime, however, the road carried on by the Madras Government as far as Jeypore should be opened out to Jugdalpore, and eventually thence to Sironcha ; and the great Brinjara route from the southern portions of the Raepore District, which passes through a part of Bustar, should also be cleared. These, with vaccination and the introduction of copper coin, might be at once commenced, and subsequently other steps as they suggest themselves. The Police now distributed over the Dependency will also be of great use in gradually accustoming the people to us, and the location of a news-writer at Jugdalpore would be attended with equally good results.'

As the Maratha Amil sixty-seven years before, so now the Victorian Englishman ; develop trade, and civilization would follow. The isolation of centuries was to end, Bastar to be opened to the world by land and by water, and its ' savages ' to exchange their freedom for ' the allurements and comforts of civilization ', trade and traders, clothes, tobacco, a better system of criminal and judicial procedure, vaccination and copper coin. Did, and do, the ghosts of the old builders of the ruins of Barsur, Bhairamgarh and Kuruspal smile to hear a newer race decree that ' Bastar must be civilized ! ' ?

A land free from rules and regulations and a race that had no use for copper coin did not square with that passion for uniformity

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

000
● 175
648

that characterized the Victorian rulers of India and still marks the framers of constitutions for the India of to-day. It could not be seen that there must have been some institutions or system in this apparently unordered Bastar to have kept her together and free from Mohammedan or Maratha interference for all those centuries. So from Glasfurd onwards Political Agents, Commissioners and Chief Commissioners sought to modernize the economics and the administration of this lovely and still lonely land. An alien police from 'civilized' India was soon followed along the gradually expanding lines of communication by Bania and Rohilla tradesmen, and by low-paid esurient subordinate officials 'lent' to the State, who regarded service in a native state only as a means to the rapid acquisition of wealth. Cultivation was to be expanded by the formation of new villages by alien immigrants; instead, the aliens were given long established Bhattra, Muria, Parja or Maria villages, nominally as lessees, over the heads of the traditional village headmen; and the lessees at once proceeded as fast as possible to get the best land into their own hands, to make the headmen's lives a burden by their repeated demands for forced labour and supplies, to ignore the use and wont of village life, especially the *sari-bori* or co-operation in supplies and labour for village bread-winning and village festivals, to introduce Hindu and Mussalman settlers, and to turn the natives of Bastar into bondservants little better than slaves by advancing them money, on terms which made repayment practically impossible, in return for their labour or that of their sons. Every immigrant trader even considered it his right to demand the labour of half a dozen 'Murias' to carry his wares for him. Consequent risings in 1876 and trouble in succeeding years led to the virtual supersession of the old Raja Bhairam Deo in 1886, and the State passed under full management on his death in 1891. From 1886 to 1891 and for the first few years of the long (1891-1908) minority of Raja Rudra Pratap Deo, a series of subordinate officials was lent as Diwans to the State, and a further evil arose in the growing array of minor State officials, few of whom were natives and none aboriginals of Bastar, abusing the ancient custom of *bisaha*, or the payment by villagers of a twentieth of their crops for the feeding of the Raja's servants, by interpreting it as a right to commandeer any aboriginal's produce at an arbitrarily fixed and often nominal price, and generally forgetting to pay even that. The newly-cleared roads soon seemed to run through wildernesses, for on villagers of roadside villages the burden of *begar*, or forced labour, and *bisaha* fell with especial severity. Being 184 miles from Raipur, the headquarters of the Commissioner and the Political Agent, Bastar was seldom visited, and the people were far too much

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

at the mercy of the incompetency or knavery of the local officials. The latter meanwhile were carrying on the prescribed policy of opening communications, introducing the criminal police and judicial system of British India, and exploiting the forests (again by forced labour). Though with the growth of trade there was much to be said for applying the Penal, Criminal Procedure and Civil Procedure Codes and the Evidence Act of British India to the open parts of the Jagdalpur tahsil and northern Bastar, they were far too advanced for most of the tribes, and remain so to this day. No notice was taken of the old system of caste or tribal or *pargana* panchayats presided over by the caste or *pargana* headman appointed by the Chief or the zamindar, which had for centuries administered rough and ready justice far more to the liking of the people than the troubles of a long investigation by a corrupt police, followed by a cumbersome magisterial enquiry and perhaps then the protracted agony of a sessions trial, to their minds unnecessary and unintelligible, with the farcical addition of assessors, chosen, so as to fulfil the requirements of a procedure code designed for a British India at least 1,000 years further advanced in civilization, from a few obsequious immigrants with no knowledge of aboriginal life or psychology. A similar attempt was made to improve on the old excise arrangements by which the local Kalar or Sundi was a village or *pargana* servant kept to distil liquor when needed for social or religious festivities, and remunerated in grain by the villagers every harvest; a system of auctioning outstills was introduced, the letter but not the spirit of arrangements in British India being copied, and the result was a number of contractors and sub-contractors all distilling and hawking liquor, and drunkenness on a scale previously unknown in Bastar and with few parallels in India. Of course trade was increasing, and more land was being cleared, *pari passu* with these growing abuses; but the moral effect of the changes was not good, and there can be few more striking examples of policy sound in motives but utterly wrong because of the divorce of administration from anthropology.

Sir Andrew Fraser, then Commissioner, in an able inspection note written after a long tour of the State in 1892, spotted much of the evil, particularly the State officials' utter ignorance of all but the villages adjacent to Jagdalpur and their headquarters, and their complete lack of touch with the people. He of course strongly advocated the policy of opening up the State, but saw that a just and active administration was necessary if the policy was to succeed. This was ultimately secured by the appointment in 1896 of Colonel (later Major-General) Fagan as Administrator. During his three years of rough and ready justice he toured the length and breadth

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

175
648

of the State, and he and his wife are still remembered with affection. The aboriginal, if he had to work on the new roads, yet saw that everyone else had to; but he no longer had to work for the alien trader and village-lessee, and he could get redress for oppression. Under Colonel Fagan and his successor, Mr. G. W. Gayer of the Indian Police, though roads were built and regular land revenue settlements effected on simplified Central Provinces lines, efficient administration kept the tribes satisfied; and for the first time medical relief and vaccination were organized in the State by Surgeon-Major Mitchell. But Mr. Gayer was succeeded by an Indian Superintendent, who held charge for the last few years of the minority and then continued till 1910 as Raja Rudra Pratap Deo's Diwan. He had served successfully as Diwan of Kalahandi State, and his intentions were admirable. Unfortunately he was unable to control his subordinates or to see that his excellent orders were enforced. The old abuses crept back into the swept and garnished State. He was responsible also for two unpopular innovations. The first was a policy of planting new primary schools all over the State, the masters being assisted by attendance peons who bullied the ryots into sending their children to school, while masters and peons levied forced labour and supplies freely. The second was the reservation of large areas as State forests, a measure very necessary as a check to the wholesale destruction of valuable timber by the aboriginals practising shifting cultivation, but bound by its very nature and its interference with long-cherished rights to arouse suspicion. It called, therefore, for great tact, and the people should have been carefully prepared for the measure, and protected from any avoidable hardship in its execution. Instead, it was carried out abruptly. Every village in the reserved areas was destroyed, though provision ought to have been made for forest villages as a source of forest labour, and if this had been done few of the villages need have been disturbed; the old village lands still often remain treeless in the forests, and in recent years it has been necessary to try and tempt settlers back to found much-needed forest villages. Oppression by State officials and by immigrant settlers, excessive levy of forced labour and supplies, unpopular new measures, and the apparent blindness of the Raja and his Diwan to popular grievances produced keen discontent, which was worked up by Lal Kalendra Singh, the first cousin and former Diwan of Raja Bhairam Deo, in the hope of securing the succession for himself. The Murias, Bhattras, and Parjas of Jagdalpur tahsil and some of the Bison-horn Marias and others in Dantewara tahsil and farther south broke into rebellion, in which the Murias of Antagarh and Kondagaon tahsils joined, only the zamindaris and

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

the Marias of the Abujhmar hills abstaining. The tribes converged on Jagdalpur, the Diwan who had been touring in the South fleeing into the Chanda district. A half battalion of regular Panjabi troops and large detachments of armed Central Provinces police soon suppressed and disarmed the rebels. A few ringleaders who had been guilty of cruel murders of isolated State officials were hanged, and several hundred men flogged, a punishment really more humane for such primitive men than imprisonment. Lal Kalendra Singh and a few of his associates were banished. The Raja was deprived of his powers, and an experienced Englishman, Mr. James May, appointed Diwan. The rebellion had been marked by keen hostility towards the immigrant exploiters, and a movement to keep Bastar for Bastaris. *Pari passu* with the punishment of the rebels, full enquiry was made into their undoubted grievances, and stern action taken against their oppressors. From 1910 till the Raja's death in 1921 the State was under virtual Government management; it has since then been under direct management, owing to the minority and the subsequent illness of the late Maharani.[1]

Save, therefore, for the short period 1908-10 the State has virtually been under Government management since 1886. Great progress has been made in developing communications. The Godavari navigation scheme referred to in the quotation above from Glasfurd's report was abandoned in 1871 after the works on the first barrier at Dummagudem in the present East Godavari district of Madras had been completed and much money had been spent on the works at the second barrier, where the river forms the boundary between Bastar and Hyderabad. This must be one of the very few great engineering works abandoned uncompleted by the British in India, defeated by the fever and sweltering heat of the valley, the difficulty of recruiting labour, lack of funds and the improbability of an adequate return for the great cost; and there are few more desolate sights than the vast ruins of the half-finished anicut, lock-gates and guard-walls that still resist the annual floods of this mighty river, and in the dry weather stand gaunt and futile in the baking wilderness of rocks and sands in which the united Godavari and Indrawati there lose themselves. With the transference of the Political Agency for Bastar from Sironcha to Raipur, all idea of the Godavari as the base-line for its communications was abandoned. Emphasis was placed on linking the north of the State with the main Nagpur-Calcutta railway line by roads from Raipur and Rajnandgaon to Jagdalpur, and the Vizagapatam Agency road from Salur

[1] The hereditary title of the Ruling Chief of Bastar was raised from Raja to Maharaja in 1932.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

rail-head below the Eastern Ghat mountains to Jeypore and the Bastar border was continued thence to Jagdalpur; subsequently roads have gradually been driven westward to Dantewara, Bijapur, Kutru and Bhopalpatnam, and southward to Sukma and Konta; the most recent development has been many miles of forest roads, constructed either as feeder roads to the Raipur and Rajnandgaon roads, or to link up the forests of Dantewara and the south with the Godavari at Tarlagudam, Cherla and Dummagudam or the Kolab-Sabari at Mismagudam and Konta. The Raipur road is now motorable throughout the year, and there is a daily mail and passenger service by it to Kanker and Dhamtari. A railway connexion with the new Raipur-Vizianagram line has been surveyed, and would have been under construction but for the world-wide financial depression. The revenue of the State has risen from about Rs. 30,000 in 1855, then received in kind or in cowry shells at a rate of 2,880 to the rupee, to well over a million rupees.

So the old order is doomed; and with the motor-bus abroad in the land and scores of aboriginals every month seeking work on the public works of the State, in the Assam tea gardens or in the towns of the Godavari valley, with the railway administration feeling this last great blank of 300 miles from Raipur to Salur by 250 from Titlagarh in Kalahandi State to Singareni in Hyderabad a slur to be removed as soon as funds permit, change comes ever faster. My successors and I, like our predecessors, are guilty of accelerating change; but we can on the one hand plead that when we came a return to the old isolation was not practical politics, and on the other that we have tried before it was too late to strengthen and revive the old tribal *panchayat* organization and restore its jurisdiction in civil and in all but serious criminal offences, to check the drunkenness made rampant by a bad excise system, to prevent the further bestowal of aboriginal villages on alien *thekadars* (lessees) and to make the post of village headman one of honour and responsibility instead of one to be held reluctantly by some dummy with no influence in the village, to abolish *bisaha*, to deprive village lessees of the right of taking forced labour, to minimize the right of officials to take it and to regulate the still necessary State demands for road and other labour so as to inconvenience the cultivator as little as possible, to see that it is paid for, and to abolish bondservice. Much of great interest could be written on the effects and reactions of the administrative measures of the last fifty years sketched in these last few pages. But the purpose of this book is to place on record while there is yet time an account of the way of life prevalent among the Maria tribes of Bastar, perhaps now the most primitive

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

174 most of their tribesmen in the Central Provinces.

● 175 In order to understand the historical position of the Gonds both in Hyderabad and in the Central Provinces we must briefly review the course of political events during the last five centuries, and in doing so, anticipate, the fuller discussion of historical developments contained in Book II.

Reliable information on the early history of the Gonds is scarce and not until Muslim times do Gond states figure in contemporary chronicles and the works of historians. There can indeed be little doubt that throughout ancient and mediæval times the larger part of the Gond country east of Berar remained a land of vast forests and poor communications. Few foreign travellers seem to have traversed it and the old literature contains but the scantiest references to its inhabitants. Yet, its 'wildness' should not be exaggerated. Buddhist relics have been found in various places and it is not unlikely that there were times when pioneers of advanced civilizations settled among the aboriginal tribesmen just as there were periods when such outposts of higher culture shrank into insignificance. In Chanda District, for instance, Bhandak near the Wardha River seems to have been a centre of Buddhism and various authorities identify this place with the old Kosala capital visited in the seventh century by Hiuen Tsiang.[1] In Bhandak has also been discovered an inscription of the Rashtrakuta King, Krishna I, the builder of the Kailasa Temple at Ellora, dealing with the grant of a village when the King was camping in Yeotmal.[2] From Buddhist times date also the Pandrolena cave-temples at Mahur in the westernmost corner of the Adilabad District, and the famous Dev Deshwar temple at Mahur—mentioned in the Garur Purana and for the last seven centuries under the guardianship of monks of the Mahanubhau sect—proves that Mahur, formerly known as Matapur, retained its importance into Hindu times.

From inscriptions and old coins we know moreover that from the 9th century A.D. onwards Rajput princes were established in various parts of the Central Provinces. Tripuri, the heart of the later Gond Kingdom of Garha-Mandla, and Chhattisgarh, for instance, were for centuries ruled by the Rajput dynasty of Haihaiya bansi. Although further archæological finds may gradually add to our knowledge of the colonies founded by such Rajput chieftains, little elucidation of the early fortunes of its Gond population can be expected from that side.

We must therefore turn to the early Muslim writers who, from the 14th century on, comment in their chronicles on campaign and political developments in the territories described by them as Gond-

1. S. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, London 1906, Vol. II. pp. 209, 214.—R. B. Hira Lal, 'Prehistoric Berar,' *Sharadashram-Varshiki*, Vol. I. Yeotmal, 1933, pp. 2, 3.

2. Hiralal Jain, 'Materials for Historic Research in Berar,' *Sharadashram Varshiki*, Vol. I. p. 12.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

wana.[1] The dawn of the 15th century finds a Gond dynasty firmly established in Garha, close to the Narbada River and Jubbulpore. The Maharajas of Garha exercised overlordship over the local Gond petty chieftains of the present districts of Jubbulpore, Mandla, Seoni, Chhindwara and Balaghat, Damoh, and parts of Hoshangabad and Betul, and retained their independence until the year 1564 A.D., when a Moghul army under Asaf Khan conquered Garha and the famous queen-regent Durgavati was slain in battle. After a period of administration by Mahommedan officers or jagirdars, the government reverted to all practical purposes to the Gond Rajas of the old family and their subordinate chiefs, who had, however, to recognize the sovereignty of the Moghul emperors. The end of the Gond dynasty of Garha came in 1780 A.D. when the Marathas imprisoned the last ruler and brought the state under direct control. South and west of Garha another Gond State arose early in the 17th century: the Kingdom of Deogarh. Its rulers, tributaries of the Maharajas of Garha, took advantage of the decline of their overlords' power subsequent to the Moghul conquest and secured for themselves a large part of the territories of Garha.

The third great Gond dynasty of the Central Provinces was that of Chanda, and it is this dynasty with which we are most directly concerned in our study of the Gonds of Hyderabad. For the Rajas of Chanda ruled over a large part of what is to-day the Adilabad District and many of the Hyderabad Gonds still recognize their authority in tribal matters. When the chieftains residing at Chanda, a fortified town on the banks of the Wardha River, first attained prominence cannot be said for certain. C. U. Wills, the author of a history of the Gond dynasties of Garha-Mandla and Deogarh[2] declares that for the south of the Central Provinces, namely Chanda and Bastar, the record of events is so meagre and inconsistent that he despaired of compiling a local history of any kind. He evidently considers the historical data contained in C. B. Lucie-Smith's *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Chanda District, Central Provinces*, 1869, entirely unreliable and based on late Brahmanical fabrications of a kind similar to the Ramnagar inscription of Mandla whose trustworthiness he has convincingly refuted.[3] The chronicle of the Chanda Rajas, as outlined by Lucie-Smith, is no doubt largely legendary and the date 870 A.D. for the establishment of the Gond dynasty as well as most of the subsequent dates belong to the realm of imagination. Notwithstanding its character as a fairly recent fabrication by Brahmins attached to the court of Chanda, the chronicle contains,

1. I do not propose to add to the unconvincing derivations of the names 'Gond' and 'Gondwana,' them appearing for the first time in literature, and confess that I have to offer no explanation for these terms, which have their origin in some of the Gondi dialects.

2. *The Raj Gond Maharajas of the Satpura Hills*. Nagpur, 1925.

3. Op. cit. pp. 13-24.—The Ramnagar inscription, which was found 10 miles south-east of Mandla, is written in Sanskrit and professes to give the family tree of the Gond Rajas of Garha, tracing back the dynasty through 54 generations.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

175 a number of traditions which are probably of considerable age and not entirely without foundation. Thus it reports that the first Gond Raja of Chanda was of Atram clan and that the fortress of Manikgarh, which lies in the hills of Rajura Taluq, was his main stronghold. Of one of his descendants, Hir Sing the chronicle says that he first "levied an impost on occupied ground," while "previous to his accession land had been like air, untaxed and free to all";—this seems to reflect the memory of a time when the Gonds paid not land-revenue but nominal tribute to their tribal chieftains. The stories of various encounters between the later Rajas of Chanda and the Emperors of Delhi are in line with the epics still sung by the Pardhans, the bards of the Raj Gonds of Adilabad, but we reach firmer ground when we find Chanda mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl. Chanda, like the other Gond states, then formed part of the Moghul empire, and when during Shah Jahan's reign Khan Dauran undertook an expedition against rebellious Gonds of Deogarh, he was reinforced by troops of the Gond Raja of Chanda. In Aurangzeb's times both Chanda and Deogarh were included in the *subah* of Berar, and Sir A. Lyall mentions that according to old revenue papers of 1666, "tribute was collected from the zamindars of those tracts, that is the Gond Rajas, and carried to the treasury at Aurangabad."[1] Some of the Gonds of the Adilabad highlands still possess patents (*sanads*) bestowed upon their ancestors by Aurangzeb, and according to these documents Utnur Taluq belonged then to the *subah* of Bidar and not to Berar. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 A.D. the Gond Rajas seem to have repudiated their allegiance to the Emperor of Delhi, but their newly gained independence was short-lived. They were far too weak and too divided among themselves to resist the rising power of the Marathas. Soon after Raghoji Bhonsla of Berar had established himself at Nagpur in 1739, he undertook the conquest of the Gond States and in 1749 the city of Chanda fell to a besieging Maratha army. For two years a shadow of power remained to the Gond Raja, but in 1751 the state was incorporated in the Bhonsla Kingdom, and the ruler Nilkant Shah was imprisoned. In recounting the end of the Chanda kingdom Lucie-Smith pays tribute to the achievement of its ancient dynasty: "Originally petty Chiefs of a savage tribe, they spread their sway over a wide dominion, reclaiming and peopling the wild forests in which they dwelt, and, save a nominal allegiance to the Delhi throne, preserving their soil for nine hundred years inviolate of foreign rule.[2] When at length they fell, they left, if we forget the few last years, a well-governed and contented kingdom, adorned with admirable works of engineering skill, and prosperous to a point no after time has reached.

1. *Gazetteer for the Hyderabad Assigned Districts (Berar)*, edited in 1870 by A. Lyall.

2. As mentioned above the chronology accepted by Lucie Smith is subject to doubt, but though no definite period for their reign can be given, the prominence of the chiefly house of Chanda is certainly of considerable antiquity.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

175

Other dynarties in the great drama of Indian story have played parts far more striking, but few have deserved so well of those they governed as the ancient house whose power passed away with Nilkant Shah."[1] The respect commanded by the chiefly house among their Gond subjects can be judged by the influence the rajas retained even when their secular power came to an end, for they continued to function as tribal headmen and their authority in all questions concerning custom and ritual remained unimpaired.

Until 1853, when the whole of the Nagpur State was taken under British administration, Raghoji's descendants ruled over Chanda, but the tract west of the Wardha river, containing the important fortress of Manikgarh and constituting to-day the Rajura Taluq, was ceded to the *Subahs* of the Deccan by the treaty of Deogaon in 1803 A.D.,[2] and has ever since formed part of the Nizam's Dominions.

From the scanty historical information available on the Chanda Kingdom it is not clear how far it extended towards the south west. Manikgarh Fort is frequently mentioned as one of the main strongholds of the Chanda Rajas, but no data appear to exist on the rest of the hill-tracts of the present Adilabad District. A family of Kumra clan now living in Utnur taluq claims descent from Gond chieftains who once held the Mahur fortress and it is possible that the Chanda Rajas exerted at one time or other overlordship over the whole of the Gond country between the Penganga and the Godavari, but written history affords no proof for such an assumption and we will have to reconsider this question later in the light of local tradition. For certain we know only that in the years before the conclusion of the treaty of Deogaon, the territory now forming the taluqs of Sirpur, Chinnur, Asifabad, Lakshetipet, Utnur, Adilabad and Both, *i.e.*, practically the whole of the Adilabad District except the taluqs of Rajura and Nirmal was included in Berar,[3] which was then jointly administered by the Nizam and the Bhonsla Raja of Nagpur. We know too that this territory contains a number of ruined forts, inferior it is true, to that of Manikgarh, but not unlike it in style, and that these are believed to have been the seats of

1. Op. cit., pp. 69, 70.

2. C. U. Wills, *British Relations with the Nagpur State in the 18th century*, Nagpur 1924, p. 248-251.

3. Under the Bahmani Kings the province of Berar was larger than it is to-day and extended as far South as the Godavari. In 1480 A.D. during the reign of Mahammed Shah III and the prime-ministership of the famous Persian Mahmud Gawan, it was divided into two sub-provinces: Gawil and Mahur. The latter included the whole of the present Yeotmal District as well as the tract between the Penganga, Pranhita and Godavari Rivers, now forming the Adilabad District of Hyderabad. During the disturbances following the execution of Mahmud Gawan, the Governor of Gawil declared his independence and founded the Imad Shahi kingdom of Berar, annexing also the sub-province of Mahur, which had remained a separate administrative unit only for fifteen years. Cf. Syed Abdur Razzaque, 'Divisions of Berar,' *Sharadashram Varshik*, Vol. I, 1944, pp. 47-51. It is very unlikely, however, that the Imad Shahi Kings were able to establish effective rule in the hill-tracts of Adilabad. Nothing is known about their relations with the neighbouring Gond Rajas of Chanda, nor about the circumstances under which the present Rajura Taluq with the fort of Manikgarh was again separated from Berar and included in the domain of the Chanda Kings.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

175 local Gond Rajas. As to the political status of these petty chieftains *vis-à-vis* the Raja of Chanda on the one side and the Nizam and the Rajas of Nagpur on the other, the chronicles are silent. None of the early European travellers whose records shed a certain amount of light on other parts of the Deccan seem to have visited this hill-tract, and the confusion on Rennell's map of 1780 A.D.[1] shows that it was then still largely *terra incognita*.[2] However, a short reference to the present Adilabad District is contained in the account of Captain J. T. Blunt, who travelled in 1795 through Chanda and Bastar and then crossed the Godavari into the Samasthan of the Raja of Paloncha.[3] He mentions a trade route running from Chanda through Chinnur and Paloncha to Rajahmundry; he did not follow this himself but kept further east, "skirting along the east side of the Seerpur Pargunnah" which evidently corresponds to the present Sirpur Taluq. According to Blunt "the districts adjoining to the eastern parts of the *Mahratta* territory," through which he passed on that occasion, "were at this time under Jukut Row, a *Goand* chief who had formerly been the principal *Rajah* in the southern parts of *Goandwannah*, and who held them as a Jagheer from the *Berar* government.....He is a *surdar* of five hundred horse in the *Mahratta service*, and was at this time absent, in command of an expedition against the districts of Adilabad and Neermul, belonging to the Nizam: these are separated from *Chanda* only by a range of hills; the passes of which had been already secured, to prevent supplies of grain being carried into the enemy's country."[4] At the time of Captain Blunt's journey the Nizam was at war with the Maratha Empire, and it appears from his account that the Gonds of the frontier districts were drawn into the struggle. This tallies with the local tradition among the Gonds of Utnur Taluq, who tell of a war in which they fought on the side of the Subedar of Nirmal against the Maratha Kings of Nagpur. Another remark of Captain Blunt tends also to show that these frontier tracts, then only lightly held by the Nizam's forces were often the scene of fighting and unrest. Thus, referring to the present taluq of Chinnur, he writes as follows: "The Purgunnah I should first enter upon, subject to the *Nizam*, was Chinnoor; the capital town of which, bearing the same name, is situated on the north bank of the river Godavari. I was informed that this was the only inhabited place in the whole district, for the Zameendar who rented the country, having rebelled about seven

1. Reproduced in C. U. Wills, *British Relations with the Nagpur State in the 18th Century*, Nagpur 1926.

2. As late as 1853 it was stated before the Royal Asiatic Society that "at present the Gondwana highlands and jungle comprise such a large tract of unexplored country that they form quite an oasis on our maps." Quoted in *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Central Provinces*, Calcutta, 1908.

3. "Narrative of a Route from Chumargher to Yettanagoodum in the Ellore Circar," reprinted in *Early European Travellers in the Nagpur Territories*, Nagpur 1924.

4. *Op. cit.*, pp. 143, 144.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

years before, the *Nizam* had sent a large body of troops to subdue him; but not being able to get possession of his person, had laid waste the country, and had encouraged his vassal to pillage it likewise. This warfare had continued about four years, when the refractory Zameendar was at last betrayed by his own adherents, and murdered; after which all his strongholds were reduced. But the calamity occasioned by this scene of rapine, and murder, fell heaviest upon the peasantry, who had fled and sought refuge in the neighbouring districts and, for the last three years, there had not been an inhabitant in the whole district, excepting a few matchlockmen in the fort of Chinnoor."[1] We do not know whether the Zamindar of Chinnoor was a Gond chief, but there can be no doubt that the turbulent conditions in this and other frontier areas had very serious repercussions on the local Gond population, which probably withdrew more and more into the hills and forests.[2]

None of the standard works on the history of Hyderabad contains any reference to the developments in the area now constituting the Adilabad District subsequent to the treaty of Deogaon in 1803, when the important taluq of Rajura was added to the Nizam's Dominions, and all my attempts to obtain relevant information from unpublished records or historical treatises in Urdu, have remained unsuccessful. Such records may exist in collections of old Persian documents, but to unearth them and reconstruct with their help the history of the district in the early 19th century would be a lengthy task.[3] It is safe to assume, however, that Hyderabad rule did not bring about any immediate change in the existing order. Until 1866 the present district of Adilabad was a sub-district consisting of two divisions: the taluq of Adilabad, then called Edlabad, and a division comprising the taluqs of Sirpur and Rajura; the revenues of Edlabad and Sirpur were farmed out and Rajura was a jagir taluq granted for the payment of troops. Thus Government control was comparatively light and interfered little with the customary mode of life of the population. The officer at the head of the district was called *Amaldar* and very old men still talk of the days of the *Amaldari* when the Gonds enjoyed the use of the land untrammelled by forest-laws, and the revenue was, at least in the hill-tracts, no more than a nominal cess.

But gradually the administration was tightened, communications were improved and Government encouraged the influx of new settlers into tracts hitherto the undisputed domain of the aboriginals. The effects

1. Op. cit., p. 142.

2. Cf. R. V. Russel's remark on the fate of the Gonds under Maratha rule: ".....the Gonds were driven to take refuge in the inaccessible highlands, where the Marathas continued to pillage and harass them, until they obtained an acknowledgement of their supremacy and the promise of an annual tribute. Under such treatment the hill Gonds soon lost every vestige of civilization, and became the cruel treacherous savages depicted by travellers of this period....." (*Imperial Gazetteer of India, Central Provinces*, Calcutta 1908, p. 139.)

3. Mr. W. V. Grigson, I.C.S., tells me that he failed to find in the old records of the Hyderabad Residency any references to conditions in the country which is now the Adilabad District.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

175 on the economic and social position of the Gonds were far reaching, and the repercussions attendant on the opening up of the District will be discussed in Book II, while reference to the newly established culture-contacts with non-aboriginal immigrants from both Telingana and Marathwara are contained in Chapter III.

162 In 1941 the Gonds of Hyderabad numbered 141,335, which is only a fraction of India's entire Gond population of more than 3,000,000. If we remember that this is about ten times the strength of the aboriginal population of the Australian continent at the time of discovery, and far exceeds in numbers the Red Indians in North America, it is indeed surprising to find only a slender volume of literature on this remarkable group of peoples.

114 The first reference to the Gonds in scientific literature is perhaps the small list of Gondi words communicated in 1844 by Dr. Voysey to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.[2] A somewhat larger one, together with a few grammatical notes was given in 1847 by Dr. O. Manager,[3] and the following year B. H. Hodgson published in the same journal a comparative vocabulary of Dravidian dialects containing among others Gondi and Oraon words.[4] Fuller, though by no means complete, are the grammar and vocabulary of the Gondi spoken in the Chindwara District, compiled by the Rev. James Dawson in 1872.[5]

But the earliest ethnological account of the Gonds is contained in the Rev. Stephen Hislop's remarkable *Papers on the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces*, edited by Sir R. Temple in 1866.[5] This book, though somewhat confusing in the presentation of material, is a mine of information for the initiated, and will be of permanent value for its very full version of a cycle of Gond myths both in Gondi and English. Fairly lengthy notes on various sections of Gonds are found in the administrative reports and papers of several of Hislop's contemporaries, notably Captain C. I. R. Glasfurd,[6] Major C. B. Lucie-Smith,[7] Sir R. Temple,[8] Sir C. Grant,[9] and Col. Ward,[10] but the information contained in these is of very uneven character. The next impor-

1. Vol. XIII. p. 19.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI. p. 286.
3. "The Aborigines of Central India," *Ibid.*, Vol. XVII, Part I, pp. 550—558.
4. *Ibid.* Vol. XXXIX, pp. 108—117, 172—198.
5. Nagpur 1866.
6. *Report on the Dependency of Bastar*. 1862, Selection from Records of the Government of India, Foreign Department No. XXXIX, Calcutta 1863.—*Report on Land Revenue Settlement of Upper Godavari District*, Nagpur 1868.
7. *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of Chanda District*, Nagpur 1870.
8. *Report on the Administration of the Central Provinces up to August 1862*. (Reprint) Nagpur 1923.—*Report on the Zamindaris and other Petty Chieftaincies in the Central Provinces in 1863* (Reprint) Nagpur 1923.
9. *Gazetteer of the Central Provinces*, Nagpur 1870.
10. Mandla Settlement Report 1868.